

Tuna that tastes good

Many Democrat candidates, in our experience over the past several election cycles, have tried to validate their campaigns' worthiness by demonstrating their 'good-works' and other bonafides in order to earn the voters' respect.

Remember the old Starkist Tuna ads where the punch line was, *"Sorry Charlie, Starkist wants Tuna that tastes good. Not Tuna with good taste."*

We have had candidates 'walk' almost every door, and undertake huge tasks of community involvement and caring, only to find that the voters didn't care if they had 'good taste.' To date we have not been able to establish traction with the voters by trying to "out nice-guy" the nice-guys. Campaigns are not about us or our candidates! Campaigns are about the voters and are their needs being served? We have to frame the choices and focus the issues better for the voter in order to win.

The Challenger is always the one providing the item(s) of contention in any sales situation, and campaigns are the purest of sales situations. The opposition has come to rely on us for a polite "No Issue" campaign to give them with a Free Pass to re-election. And as long as we don't hold them accountable for their actions they can defer, discount, or deny any issue. Our previous co-dependent campaigns have been defacto endorsements that they were doing a good job. These passive campaign styles have implicitly given the voter permission to re-elect them. And it has worked – for THEM!

We've had candidates try enabling behavior to the point that they did not even identify themselves as Democrats anywhere in their literature or signage. And remember the gubernatorial candidate who claimed he was an Independent, just using the Democrat's slot? Each time we shamed our brand all we accomplished was to leave our base at home – disgusted and disappointed in us as candidates and as a party.

Voters simply decide upon the issues put before them. It's like getting a menu, voters don't order "off-script." If you don't present it, it's not an issue for the voter. Without a "choice," what are they to do? How do they voice an objection without a choice?

The opposition will try to distract and deny whenever challenged. Don't let the opposition become the challenger either, keep them in their place with penetrating questions. Become the prosecutor, hold them responsible. Challengers are responsible for establishing the points of contention and keeping the voter focused upon them. Distraction is easy. Know that the voter will always try to pick the easiest questions whenever they can. It's not an issue until the voter makes it part of their vote-calculus.

Today many generational changes have occurred and topics that were once taboo are now ripe for change. These changes are why for the past decades we have been seeing the Old Guard disparately trying to set Constitutional Amendments, and other 'Dog-Whistles' in place to protect their old prejudices and distract the voters. They know they have lost the millennial generation and probably the Xs and Ys also.

POLITICAL INTERVENTIONS

It's time for us to start using a different strategy. We need to conduct campaigns that are "Political Interventions." With an "Intervention" we can leverage the new values of younger voters against our opposition. We start with the belief that our younger neighbors are people of good heart and mind who actually hold root beliefs and values similar to ours. We have to make the new voters ask themselves if they endorse and support the legislature's failures, while we give them choices. And, we need to hold up a lens to make the Old Guard see their results through the eyes of the new voters.

As with any addict or alcoholic, we need to hold our opposition accountable to our values with simple, direct examples. And questions focusing on where the Old Guard's dogma and prejudices are in conflict with today's understanding of Fair Play and what is Right. We can own the dialog of this campaign with a strategy of active engagement, keeping voter's attention focused on OUR questions holding the GOP accountable.

Questions like: "Why did our legislature intentionally go home leaving 78,000 of our low-income neighbors without health insurance, again?" or "Why leave Education funding eight years behind, just to enable another tax cut for the wealthy?" And then end by asking: "Do you think this is Right? Is this Fair? Do you approve of that?"

If our model is one where we make observations, supported by honest examples, ended by questions of "Do you think that is Fair?" or "Do you think that is the Right thing to do?" We would set a very competitive campaign environment while quietly maintaining civility and not going "negative" or entering a shouting-match. We can make our accusations in the form of questions that the voter is forced to answer for themselves. Is this the way they want their legislature to work? Do they approve?

This year, more than in any previous year, our GOP legislature has given us the Perfect Storm of open issues where they have violated their own faith values, family values, and their values of fair-play; in order to preserve old prejudices and grudges. If we call the voters on these conundrums, we can hold them accountable for their legislator's actions – or lack thereof. We can SHAME the voters into change.

This will change the election results and even the attitudes of legislators not being directly challenged in this election. Win or lose, we win either way. All we have to do is hold the opposition accountable to the voter for their actions just like the Tea-Party does. Only we have to focus the voters' attention on our issues and values.

Are THEY (as voters) comfortable endorsing and affirming this kind of behavior? Bottomline: "Voter, who are you? What are your real values?" A campaign of this type also defines the "Bonneville Democrat Brand" for ourselves and future candidates.

We have to make the voter take responsibility for either endorsing or to rejecting the current GOP cronyism. We can allow no middle ground. It's not about us, we have to make it all about the voter and their values. Voter, approve or reject GOP cronyism?

VOTER – YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE!

